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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

5 March 1987

Chad: Prospects for the Habre Regime

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Summary

Hissein Habre has built a sense of national unity not seen in Chad since the overthrow of its first ruler in 1975. Moreover, Habre's recent military successes--and his ability to attract substantial French and US military aid--have enhanced his domestic standing as a political and military leader. Nevertheless, he still must contend with deep-seated ethnic and regional rivalries within his government and the military, as well as manage an economy that has virtually no resource base. Habre probably calculates--correctly in our view--that continued military gains north of the 16th parallel or a negotiated Libyan withdrawal will help maintain the allegiance of recently rallied rebels and southern insurgents--factors that will largely determine the legitimacy and longevity of his regime.

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of African and Latin American Analysis.

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This paper was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA [redacted]

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A military stalemate--the most likely scenario over the next year--could cause some noticeable strains to develop in Habre's coalition. The campaign against the Libyans has been a major unifying factor and military inactivity probably would lead to infighting and possible redefection of some factions. A prolonged stalemate also is likely to produce a situation conducive to negotiations, which we believe some members of the Chadian military would view as a substantial setback to their goal of inflicting a sound military defeat on the Libyans. Continued military successes would further boost Habre's domestic position and subdue--but still not eliminate--Chad's chronic ethnic and regional problems. Whatever the military outcome, however, Habre will remain dependent on Western financial and military assistance to bolster his regime, to integrate recently rallied insurgents, and to support a vulnerable economy. [REDACTED]

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In our judgment, Hissein Habre--in power since 1982--hopes to capitalize on recent military successes north of the 16th parallel to reinforce unity within the 35,000-man military, to maintain the allegiance of recently rallied insurgents and southern politicians, and to consolidate his image as a strong and confident leader who can adequately safeguard Chadian interests. Although Habre has proved far more successful than his predecessors as a political leader, we believe the military situation over the next year or so will play a major role in determining the longevity of the Habre regime. [REDACTED]

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Military Strategy

The signing last October of a military cooperation accord between the Chadian government and followers of Goukouni Oueddei--a rebel leader with long-standing ties to Tripoli and animosity toward Chadian President Hissein Habre--signalled a new phase in the country's 20-year civil war. The military alliance gave N'Djamena access to Popular Armed Forces (FAP) strongholds near Fada and in the Tibesti mountains north of the 16th parallel, the delineation of the de facto partition of Chad. We now estimate that in addition to Goukouni's 2000-2500 rallied FAP, Habre has some 10,000 government troops (FANT) arrayed in the north against a Libyan force of about 12,000. [REDACTED]

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Since rallying to the government, FAP guerrillas have used their familiarity with the terrain and Libyan logistics to conduct small-scale attacks on Libyans and the remaining (about 2,000) Libyan-backed Chadian rebels. FAP cooperation also has permitted Habre to infiltrate FANT forces into the Tibesti and Fada regions. The FANT's most impressive

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victory to date came in early January when its forces routed over 1,000 Libyan troops and retook Fada. [redacted]

25X1 [redacted] Habre, buoyed by recent successes, is preparing to defend Fada against a Libyan counterattack. In addition, FANT/FAP strategy appears to call for continued attacks against Libyan strongholds in the rugged Tibesti mountains and small-scale raids on Libyan patrols. This may include an attempt to retake Zouar, held by the FAP until last December. [redacted]

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The Habre Factory

Habre's success in courting the support of many of the country's numerous factions over the past two years, coupled with his military ventures during the past three months, have strengthened his political position. The Habre regime already has exceeded the normal life expectancy of a Chadian regime, in large measure due to Habre's personal leadership and considerable military and political skills. In particular, US Embassy and [redacted]

[redacted] indicate that Habre has had more success than his predecessors in drawing together various Chadian factions and beginning to build a sense of national unity. [redacted]

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These sources indicate that Habre's assertive leadership style, keen political instincts, and strong military reputation have allowed him to assert at least partial control over Chad's diverse ethnic groups. [redacted]

[redacted] one of Habre's greatest accomplishments has been his consolidation of control over a traditionally fractious military. Moreover, Goukouni loyalists and government officials, earlier this month, signed a political accord that reaffirmed and reinforced their military cooperation agreement. [redacted]

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Habre also has curbed the activities of southern insurgents and recruited southern politicians into the government. The US Embassy reports that as many as 15,000 southern insurgents have rallied to the Habre government during the past year, substantially improving security in Chad's most important economic region. Although some southerners in the military continue to complain about the favored status of the northern Toubou-dominated Presidential Guard, [redacted] and US Embassy reporting indicates that most realize that no other Chadian leaders possess Habre's political acumen. [redacted]

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Habre's proven ability to attract substantial French and US military assistance has further enhanced his domestic standing, in our judgment. The presence of 2,200-2,400 French troops, French ground attack and fighter aircraft,

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and Paris's quick response to Chadian requests for more support have served as concrete manifestations of French backing for the Habre government. [redacted] in N'Djamena reports that the Chadian military establishment generally is seized with the idea of forcing Libya out of Chad and morale is high. [redacted]

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Continuing Threats

Despite his successes, Habre, a northerner and an Anakaza Toubou, continues to face a number of political and economic problems for which there are no easy solutions. In particular, he must contend with ethnic and regional rivalries within the military and government, as well as an economy that has virtually no resource base and depends almost entirely on foreign economic and military assistance.

Ethnic and Regional Divisions. Reporting from the US Embassy [redacted] indicate that Chadian politics continues to be marked by intense ethnic rivalries and deep-seated mistrust. Even among the politically dominant northerners, resentment of perceived Toubou privilege and heavy-handedness often leads to open conflict. [redacted]

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[redacted] despite Habre's success in persuading rival groups to rally, some southerners remain wary and suspicious of any northern-based regime. Last December, 5,000 recently rallied southern insurgents refused a government request to move north to take part in guerrilla and military operations, according to the [redacted]

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The Economy. Drought and an insurgency in the south--Chad's most productive region--have contributed to the deterioration of an economy already described by the World Bank as the world's poorest. A precipitous drop over the last two years in the price of cotton, which accounts for about 85 percent of export earnings and approximately 50 percent of government revenues, has added to the economic disaster. [redacted]

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Although development experts have given Habre credit for his efficient management and attempts at economic reform, US Embassy [] indicate Habre has little flexibility as long as the economy remains on a war footing. Military spending, which accounted for an estimated \$27 million last year, is the largest single item in Chad's budget, and to stay economically afloat, Habre must depend on massive infusions of French--and to a lesser extent US--assistance. French military assistance, including the cost of a major intervention, probably totalled over \$100 million in 1986 and the US Embassy in N'Djamena reports that the French plan to send an additional \$82 million in military assistance to Chad this year. []

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Moreover, Chad must depend on Western donors to fund even basic necessities and to pay civil servants. Since 1983, France has provided some \$124 million in economic assistance, including budgetary support, while the US has contributed some \$118 million in economic and food aid. The Embassy reports that Western financial aid is likely to total at least \$20 million in fiscal 1987 to help offset the budgetary deficit. []

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Habre's Prospects

In our judgment Habre probably recognizes that further military successes north of the 16th parallel will help preserve the hard won unity in the military and maintain the allegiance of recently rallied insurgents and southern politicians. Although we believe Habre and his French patrons probably agree that it is unlikely Chadian forces can push Libyan troops back to the Aozou Strip,¹ Chadian forces probably will try to capture as much territory as possible in an effort to raise Tripoli's cost of occupation. On the political front, we believe Habre--judging he is now negotiating from a position of strength and preferring to deal directly with Tripoli--will continue to reject calls for reconciliation conferences that equate his regime with various Chadian factions backed by Libya. For the same reasons, we expect Habre will reject outright calls for another government of national unity similar to the now

1. Libya has occupied the Aozou Strip since 1973, basing its juridical claim on the Laval-Mussolini boundary treaty of 1935--although the instruments of ratification were never exchanged. Tripoli, which has built schools and introduced its own currency throughout the area, has used the Strip as a jumping-off point for its interventions further to the south in Chad. []

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crippled, Libyan-backed Transitional National Unity Government (GUNT) of which he was a member in 1979. []

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Military Scenarios

In our judgment, Habre's ability over the next year to build on his past successes and further solidify his claim to be a national leader and to strengthen cohesion among Chad's various elements will depend in large measure on the progress of the war effort. []

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Stalemate. *In our judgment, the most likely scenario over the next year in northern Chad will be a general military standoff with neither Libyan nor Chadian forces being in a position to win a clear or decisive victory. Under these conditions, we believe serious, but still manageable, strains probably would surface in an increasingly restless military. Most notably, we believe infighting among rival military factions would increase as would the tendency of newly rallied FAP forces to redefect, particularly if Habre is unable to provide regular food supplies and salaries.* []

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In addition, a prolonged military stalemate in Chad could prompt political negotiations--a development Habre probably would approach with suspicion, unless he was allowed to play a prominent role in the deliberations. Although we believe Habre's military successes, his enhanced position at home, and his greater international recognition have given him greater leverage in any negotiation scenario--and certainly more than during Paris-Tripoli talks in 1984--a political solution, rather than a military one, leading to a Libyan military withdrawal could be viewed by some Chadian government and military officials as a political defeat for Habre and encourage further infighting. []

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Continued Military Successes for Habre. *Additional Chadian military successes--especially if they led to a gradual movement northward of the line of Chadian held territory or a Libyan withdrawal--would significantly boost Habre's domestic standing. Such a victory would reinforce Habre's claim to be a truly national leader and undercut the position of potential splinter groups. At the same time, continued foreign economic and military assistance would reinforce the image of Habre as the only leader able to hold Chad together.* []

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We believe, however, that after an initial period of euphoria--perhaps lasting up to a year--Habre would still have to cope with Chad's underlying ethnic and regional tensions. While military successes probably would strengthen Habre's hand, there are still risks of serious

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missteps that could seriously erode his position. For example, Habre's Anakaza Toubou--emboldened by his victory--might be tempted to solidify their privileged positions by using heavyhanded tactics against military rivals and local populations, particularly in southern regions. [REDACTED]

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Likewise, further military victories also could lead political hardliners in the government party to move against rival political groups, a situation that would alienate many southern politicians, who are pressing for a pluralistic political system. Under these conditions, Habre would be faced with a number of politically difficult and unappealing decisions that seriously would test his political mettle. On the one hand, he would be forced to exert greater control over Toubou members of the military and restrain party hardliners. At the same time, he would be under pressure to uphold promises he made to southern insurgents and politicians while inducing them to rally. [REDACTED]

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Successive Military Defeats. *Although we believe such a scenario is unlikely, a series of substantial military reverses north of the 16th parallel, particularly if Chadian forces suffer large numbers of casualties, could begin to undermine Habre's political position.* [REDACTED]

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In the face of such defeats, we expect that Habre's fragile coalition of forces would begin to disintegrate. In particular, we believe some newly allied FAP forces would redefect to the Libyan forces, flee to the mountains, or go into exile, probably taking with them supplies and equipment provided by Habre. In addition, we believe--based in part on past practice--that some rallied southern insurgents would bolt the government, possibly reestablishing contact with Tripoli and reopening a southern front. [REDACTED]

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Although Habre is likely to withdraw from positions rather than risk losing large numbers of troops in hopeless battles, Libyan or rebel territorial gains below the 16th parallel, coupled with heavy Chadian casualties, could prompt some members of the military to challenge Habre's military leadership. Competition over military supplies and limited financial resources would enhance tensions between Toubou, Hadjerai, and southern members of the military, possibly leading to fragmentation along ethnic and regional lines. [REDACTED]

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Prospects For Habre's Death or Removal From Office

Although we believe Habre would be most vulnerable if forced to deal with a series of disastrous military defeats--a scenario we consider unlikely over the next twelve months--Chad's personalistic politics and fractious

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political complexion make it impossible to rule out Habre's sudden removal from power, whatever the military outcome. In our judgment, coup plotters most likely would come from northern elements within the Presidential Guard or the military who are jealous of the influence of Habre's Anakaza Toubou. Any coup attempt would have relatively little chance of succeeding without the participation of at least some of the 200-400-man security force which guards Habre and is made up of troops personally loyal to him. Should Habre be overthrown or forced out of N'Djamena--rather than killed--we believe he would reorganize his personal forces and mount a guerrilla war against whoever is in power at the time.²

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Habre's overthrow or unexpected demise

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25X1 [redacted] would create a political vacuum and could set off a protracted struggle for power that would seriously undermine N'Djamena's ability to carry out the war effort and possibly result in a civil war based on ethnic and regional lines. There are no clear frontrunners to succeed Habre, but we believe any successor most likely would emerge from Habre's inner circle of advisors--most of who are northern Toubou. Whoever took power or was annointed as successor, however, almost certainly would begin his tenure lacking broad-based support from other ethnic groups or regions. Embassy [redacted] reporting indicates that in any succession struggle

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2. While we believe, based on US Embassy and [redacted] that the French see Habre as the only leader capable of unifying Chad, we also believe that the extent to which Paris is willing to support Habre probably has clear limits. Although we would expect the French to do whatever is necessary to preserve the Habre government from an all-out defeat by Libya, for example, we do not believe that Paris would intervene militarily to protect him from a domestically-inspired coup attempt. [redacted]

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Taher Guinassou and Mahamat Nouri--long allied with Habre--are two candidates around whom other Toubou would rally.

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Implications For The United States

Habre will continue to look first to the French and then to the US to provide Chad with military assistance. At the very least, Habre will lobby the US and France for regular delivery of weaponry to maintain the military's level of preparedness. Faced with military setbacks or the prospect of a significant military defeat, Habre would press France for a more determined intervention and the US for a sizeable increase in the level of military assistance.

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Irrespective of the military situation, Habre will continue to look to the West for economic assistance to meet basic economic needs and deal with war-related socio-economic problems. In particular, Habre will look to Washington for assistance to feed and relocate Chadian refugees. In addition, Habre will need support to pay civil servants and the military, to maintain the loyalty of over 17,000 recently rallied rebels, and to rechannel military personnel into productive, civilian occupations.

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